

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 SP-02 L-01  
INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 PM-03 DODE-00 IO-06 INRE-00  
OMB-01 ACDA-10 A-01 CA-01 /053 W  
-----023579 281620Z /44

O 281555Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6349

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USBERLIN IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 09391

LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, MILI, BQG, AKB

SUBJECT: RUMORS OF RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO  
EAST BERLIN: CUSTOMS CONTROLS

REFS: (A) BERLIN 9234 (B) USBER 3208 (C) BERLIN 8349

1. WHILE MOST OF THE RECENT CABLE TRAFFIC ON POSSIBLE  
GDR MEASURES TO RESTRICT ACCESS HAS CENTERED ON THE  
POSSIBLE CLOSING OF THE CHECKPOINTS OR CHANGES  
IN DOCUMENTATION FOR DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL STATIONED  
IN EAST BERLIN, ANOTHER POSSIBILITY WHICH HAS NOT BEEN  
ADDRESSED IS THE INTRODUCTION OF CUSTOMS CONTROLS  
ON DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL HERE AND EXERCISED AT THE  
CHECKPOINTS. GIVEN THE FACT THAT THE EAST GERMANS  
HAVE BROACHED THE GENERAL SUBJECT WITH SOME  
EMBASSIES (REF C), WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK THIS IS  
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A MORE LIKELY DEVELOPMENT THAN THE CLOSING OF THE  
CHECKPOINTS OR THE SUDDEN INTRODUCTION OF NEW PROCEDURES  
REQUIRING THE SHOWING OF DIPLOMATIC VISAS RATHER THAN  
AUSWEISES.

2. WE THEREFORE TAKE A LESS SANGUINE VIEW OF THE  
CHARACTER OF WEST GERMAN CUSTOMS ACTIVITIES AT THE

SECTOR CROSSING POINTS THAN USBER APPARENTLY DOES  
(PARA 7, REF B). LOOKING AT THE  
SITUATION FROM THE EAST, IT IS INDISPUTABLE THAT THE  
ACTIVITIES OF CUSTOMS AGENTS AT CHECKPOINT CHARLIE  
CROSSING POINT HAVE INCREASED DRAMATICALLY IN RECENT  
WEEKS AND ARE CURRENTLY OF A FAR MORE VISIBLE  
CHARACTER THAN WAS PREVIOUSLY TRUE. AT ONE TIME IT  
WAS THE CASE THAT "CUSTOMS SEARCHES ARE OFTEN  
CONDUCTED AT SOME DISTANCE BEHIND CROSSING POINTS",  
AS STATED REFTEL B. HOWEVER, THIS IS CERTAINLY THE  
CASE NO LONGER. OUR RECENT OBSERVATIONS CONFIRM  
THAT WEST GERMAN CUSTOMS AGENTS CURRENTLY OPERATE  
FROM WITHIN THE AREA OCCUPIED BY THE ALLIED MILITARY  
AT CHECKPOINT CHARLIE AND SOMETIMES EVEN IN FRONT OF  
THEM IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE CUSTOMS AGENTS ARE THE  
FIRST PERSONS ENCOUNTERED WHEN TRANSITING EAST TO  
WEST. THE CUSTOMS AGENTS OPERATE IN SIGNIFICANT  
NUMBERS, SOMETIMES AS MANY AS HALF A DOZEN  
GROUPED TOGETHER IN FRONT OF THE US PORTION OF THE  
MILITARY BOOTH. MOST SIGNIFICANT, WEST GERMAN  
CUSTOMS AGENTS NOW APPEAR ROUTINELY TO STOP AND SEARCH  
DIPLOMATIC PLATED VEHICLES COMING FROM EAST BERLIN,  
INCLUDING AT LEAST ONE INSTANCE INVOLVING A BRITISH  
EMBASSY VEHICLE OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE.  
(WE ASSUME SOVIET DIPLOMATS ARE NOT STOPPED, BUT WOULD  
APPRECIATE KNOWING IF THIS IS INDEED THE CASE.)  
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3. WE ARE NOT DISPUTING THE NEED FOR SOME KIND OF  
CONTROL ON THE FLOW OF NARCOTICS, ILLEGAL ALIENS  
AND OTHER SMUGGLING INTO WEST BERLIN. HOWEVER, THE  
HIGHLY VISIBLE NATURE OF THESE ACTIVITIES AT  
SECTOR-SECTOR CROSSING POINTS IN RECENT  
WEEKS SEEMS TO US TO PROVIDE THE GDR WITH A  
BASIS FOR RATIONALIZING INCREASES IN  
ITS OWN CUSTOMS ACTIVITIES AT THE CHECKPOINTS, IF IT  
SO CHOOSES. (AS THINGS NOW STAND, THE GDR EXERCISES  
CUSTOMS CONTROLS ON TRAVELERS, EXCEPT FOR DIPLOMATS,  
ALLIED MILITARY PERSONNEL AND MISSION-PLATED CIVILIANS  
STATIONED IN WEST BERLIN.) WE BELIEVE THAT THE  
RECENT APPEARANCE OF NEW, HIGHLY VISIBLE CUSTOMS SIGNS  
AT THE FRIEDRICHSTRASSE AND OTHER CHECKPOINTS MAY  
BE DIRECTLY RELATED TO GDR OBSERVATIONS OF THE  
INCREASED ACTIVITIES OF WESTERN CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES  
AT CHECKPOINT CHARLIE.

4. THE GDR MAY SEEK TO USE THIS SITUATION TO  
REQUIRE DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL ACCREDITED TO THE  
GDR TO DECLARE MERCHANDISE PURCHASED

IN THE WEST AND BROUGHT INTO THE EAST. IN OUR VIEW, THE GDR WOULD SEE THIS AS A LOGICAL EXTENSION OF ITS CURRENT CUSTOMS ACTIVITIES AT THE SECTOR CROSSING POINTS, AND AS A DESIRABLE INCREMENTAL ADDITION TO ITS PRACTICES INTENDED TO DEMONSTRATE FURTHER THAT THE SECTOR BOUNDARY IS AN INTERNATIONAL FRONTIER. IN TERMS OF TIMING, THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW YEAR WOULD SEEM A LOGICAL DATE FOR ANY ALTERATIONS IN CUSTOMS PRACTICES WHICH THE GDR MAY WISH TO ENFORCE.

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 SP-02 L-01  
INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 PM-03 DODE-00 IO-06 INRE-00  
OMB-01 ACDA-10 A-01 CA-01 /053 W  
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O 281555Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6350

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USBERLIN IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BERLIN 09391

LIMDIS

5. COMMENT. WHILE NON-ALLIED DIPLOMATS STATIONED HERE WOULD RESENT SUCH CONTROLS, THEY PROBABLY WOULD ACCEDE TO THEM WITHOUT TOO MUCH DIFFICULTY. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE THREE WESTERN ALLIES' POSITION ON THE STATUS OF BERLIN, DIPLOMATS FROM THESE EMBASSIES COULD NOT SUBMIT TO SUCH CONTROLS. WE BELIEVE THEREFORE SOME CONTINGENCY PLANNING IS REQUIRED IN THE EVENT THE GDR SEEKS TO IMPOSE SUCH CONTROLS ON DIPLOMATS, AND PARTICULARLY ON THE THREE WESTERN EMBASSIES. BOLEN

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